

June 21, 2011

Dear committee members: Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of adolescents. I am Clarice Begemann, a nurse practitioner for 21 years, living at 41 Highland Avenue, Branford, CT, and I work in New Haven, CT at Wilbur Cross High School in a School Based Health Center.

The end of the school year is a perfect time to talk about adolescent health. For adolescents, being involved in positive activities is what keeps them mentally and physically healthy. For some, coming to school is what lends stability and feelings of self worth in their lives...they can handle a chaotic environment while they have the support of teachers and staff. Now, it is summer and there is not much to do in New Haven if you can't find work. Park programs are for younger children. Youth at Work can't place all the teens who apply. We see students decompensate as the school year ends-- the thoughts of two months at home without their support structure feels overwhelming. So, any programs/jobs for youth is key for positive youth development.

About one third of my work in the high school revolves around family planning, mostly for girls, but we try to get the boys in also. A key to students using our services is that we provide confidential care, as the student surveys reflect. Our role as health care providers is to give them accurate information so that they made knowledgeable responsible choices.

The New Haven Board of Education's decision to allow dispensing of birth control this year in School Based Health Centers has enabled teenagers to act TODAY on their decision to prevent unintended pregnancy. This school year alone, we had 219 visits where birth control was dispensed. Although we don't have enough years to have statistically significant information, the number of positive pregnancy tests was 13 versus 18 last year, with about the same number of pregnancy tests. Access to health care and supplies is key.

In my experience, adolescents can make informed choices about their reproductive care, involving the adults they trust. Our laws in CT support this right, and no mandate of whom they need to involve is required.

Thank you.

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